

## YOUTH ACTION COUNCIL ON TRANSITION (YouthACT)

### What is YouthACT?

The **Youth Action Council on Transition (YouthACT)** is a national initiative to get more youth with disabilities and their allies involved as leaders who partner with adults and organizations to improve opportunities for youth to succeed in life. YouthACT is led by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth (NCWD/Youth) at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) with funding from the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).

"Transition" is the process and period of change that youth go through to become adults. Transition typically occurs between ages 12 and 25. During transition, youth need a variety of opportunities and supports to learn and develop skills and experience, set and achieve goals, and make personal decisions about school, work, and life.

Many organizations and government agencies are responsible for helping youth transition to adulthood. This includes schools, employment and training programs, afterschool and recreation programs, health and mental health services, housing programs, disability services, courts and juvenile justice agencies, and child welfare and foster care programs.

Too often, youth don't have a voice when agencies and organizations are deciding what youth services and opportunities to offer. **It is important for agencies and organizations to hear from youth about what they need and want during the transition years so they can provide the right opportunities, services, and supports.** For this reason, YouthACT aims to increase positive youth-adult partnerships where young people and adults work together, share power, and support and learn from each other to build stronger communities. All individuals in the partnership have the opportunity to engage in planning, decision-making, and action consistent with their own interests and skills.

Each YouthACT team consists of two emerging youth leaders (youth, ages 12-25, who have disabilities or are allies of the disability community), one adult partner, and a supporting organization.

YouthACT team members are asked to commit to participating in their YouthACT team for at least two years and up to four years.





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### Youth have the opportunity to:

- Attend the annual national training with their YouthACT team in Washington, D.C.
- Complete training in leadership, advocacy skills, youth transition policies, and issues affecting youth with disabilities.
- Create a local action plan with their YouthACT team for how they will work together year-round.
- Co-lead meetings with a group of youth to discuss what youth need to make a successful transition to adulthood (“youth transition needs”) and how to improve youth services and opportunities where they live.
- Speak publicly and give presentations to youth, families, and the agencies and organizations that serve youth about how to improve services and opportunities for youth.
- Participate in national YouthACT activities including monthly national conference calls and quarterly webinars or video conferences with all the YouthACT teams and create youth-driven materials and tools on youth leadership and transition topics.

The 2013 YouthACT teams (current alumni) are based at the following supporting organizations:

- Ala Costa Centers for the Developmentally Disabled, Berkeley, CA
- Quality Trust, Washington, DC
- Rhode Island Parent Information Network, Cranston, RI
- The Arc Tennessee, Nashville, TN

The 2014 YouthACT teams are based at the following supporting organizations:

- California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, Sacramento, CA
- The Autism Society of Indiana, Indianapolis, IN
- Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, St. Paul, MN

The 2015 YouthACT teams are based at the following supporting organizations:

- Ability Connection Colorado, Denver, CO
- Colton-Redlands-Yucaipa Regional Occupational Program, Redlands, CA
- Epilepsy Foundation of Eastern Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
- Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health, Saint Paul, MN

Learn more about YouthACT at <http://www.ncwd-youth.info/youth-act>.